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Second Death: Theatricalities of the Soul in Shakespeare's Drama. By Donovan Sherman. Edinburgh Critical Studies in Shakespeare and Philosophy. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. Pp. x + 214.

Donovan Sherman's study of the theatricalities of the human soul in Shakespeare's England sets out from two basic premises. The first is that of the soul's conflicted relation to the self: simultaneously "a metonym of identity—'he's a kind soul'" and "something that can be possessed—'she has a good soul'" (1), the soul places the Christian believer at odds with an embodied self, resulting in "a human figure that by definition and design must be fundamentally split" (6). The second premise is that of the soul's resistance to representation: being immaterial, the soul is strictly speaking unrepresentable, yet lends itself to various forms of nonrepresentative theatricality both in the theater and in the lived experience of the believer. At once self-grounding and self-alienating, the human soul finds expression in an analogously paradoxical mode of performance: "a set of bodily practices such as concealment, deferral, withholding, silence, whispering, stillness, and other highly visible, though obstinately non-mimetic, behaviours" that allow Shakespeare and his contemporaries "to evoke the soul theatrically without allowing it to become represented" (39).

The book's introduction and first chapter set up these central theses, focusing on English works of the period (Davies's *Nosce Teipsum*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*), while drawing on classical and postclassical sources on the soul (Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Plotinus, Luther, Calvin) as well as modern and contemporary philosophy (Wittgenstein, Cavell). The remaining three chapters then look at three particular topics—metempsychosis, the memorial, and the elegy—in relation to three Shakespeare plays (*The Merchant of Venice*, *Coriolanus*, *The Winter's Tale*), alongside a selection of non-Shakespeare works (Donne, Jonson, Marlowe, Milton, among others) and other modern thinkers (Artaud, Bakhtin, Derrida). The chapters range across this corpus while focusing on such particularly illustrative figures as Shylock, Coriolanus, and Leontes. "In different ways," Shylock and Coriolanus "take on a corporeal grammar . . . that evokes the impossibility of [the soul's] physical manifestation" and are consequently "punished within the relentlessly mimetic

worlds into which they are cast" (119). By contrast, Leontes, who similarly "refuses to accept the representational logic of his surroundings, . . . ultimately finds himself redeemed and reincorporated into his familial and political realms"—an "uneasy truce" that "suggests the possibility of the mimetic economy to absorb the expressivity of the soul's bodily condition" (119). Finally, a conclusion looks at *Hamlet*, relating "a sense of virtuality" (165) that Sherman finds at work in this play to the notion of the avatar in contemporary virtual environments such as *Second Life*: "Was a soul, for citizens of Elizabethan England, similar to an avatar for us?" (170).

Sherman's book adds to the store of scholarship defamiliarizing a quotidian and seemingly unproblematic aspect of the period's psychological and religious experience; it invites us to take a second look at the intersections of soulhood, selfhood, and performance in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries; and it ventures an intriguing analogy between this set of issues and the now-omnipresent notion of one's virtual persona or avatar. The book should be of particular interest to scholars working on presentist/universalist and neotheoretical approaches, and it suitably appears in the Edinburgh Critical Studies in Shakespeare and Philosophy, a series introduced by its editor, Kevin Curran, as "push[ing] back against the critical orthodoxies of historicism and cultural studies to clear a space for scholarship that confronts aspects of literature that can neither be reduced to nor adequately explained by particular historical contexts" (x).

Sherman's arguments presume a broadly orthodox notion of the soul: personal, immortal, joined with but ultimately distinct from the body, separated from it at the moment of death, assuming immediate conscious existence in the afterlife. This is largely justified by the book's focus on the popular sphere, as this certainly was the view most widely accepted in the period. But when the discussion turns to authors who maintained alternative positions, which could entail very different psychological and spiritual experiences, these tend to be overlooked or misrepresented. For example, Sherman fails to recognize mortalist doctrine in the words of Milton's Adam (140–41), and we hear nothing of how this might relate to Milton's own mortalism and his rejection of soul-body dualism or of how the book's central premises might fare in the light of such views. Elsewhere, we read that "to believe in soul sleep is to believe that wandering souls, freed upon death, go on to possess bodies" (36). Again, it is not merely that this is incorrect but that another opportunity to engage with less conventional views is missed. These lapses do not significantly detract from the main thrust of Sherman's argument, but readers interested in such complementary perspectives may want to consult other work in the field: Richard Sugg's *Smoke of the Soul: Medicine, Physiology*

and Religion in Early Modern England (2013), for example, where some of the same authors are discussed.

The book's explicit focus is on the state of the soul in this life rather than the life hereafter: "This is not a book about the dead, nor of ghosts, but rather the maintenance of the soul in the living" (167). This is a welcome shift in emphasis with respect to previous work emerging from the field's recent "turn to religion," which, as Sherman points out (2–3), has tended to focus on the soul's fate in the afterlife, with a particular interest in such phenomena as revenants and apparitions. In theory, this new emphasis justifies Sherman in omitting discussion of demonology. In practice, however, not only does the book go on to discuss stage ghosts, including the notoriously suspect apparition in *Hamlet* (165–67), but also goes on to discuss them in precisely those terms that invite a demonological perspective, as when it raises the key question of the apparition's identity. Whatever is to be made of Sherman's claims here, some engagement with the demonological argument, and the critical tradition that has accumulated on various sides of this argument, would have made for a more nuanced and authoritative discussion.

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